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Dateline DEA

Drug Enforcement Administration's Biweekly E-mail Informant

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Top Stories from the DEA, December 3-16, 2011

Money Laundering Scheme For Hezbollah Exposed: \$483 Million Civil Complaint Filed

On December 15 a civil money-laundering and forfeiture complaint alleging a massive, international scheme was filed in the Southern District of New York. This complaint alleges that Lebanese financial institutions, including a bank and two exchange houses linked to Hezbollah, used the U.S. financial system to launder narcotics trafficking and other criminal proceeds through West Africa and back into Lebanon. As part of the scheme, funds were wired from Lebanon to the United States to buy used cars, which were then transported to West Africa. Cash from the sale of the cars, along with proceeds of narcotics trafficking, were then funneled to Lebanon through Hezbollah-controlled money laundering channels.

Substantial portions of proceeds were paid to Hezbollah, designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization. In the complaint it is alleged that Hezbollah-linked financial institutions involved in the scheme included the Lebanese-Canadian Bank and two Lebanese exchange houses: the Hassan Ayash Exchange Company and Ellissa Holding and their related subsidiaries and affiliates. The complaint seeks civil money laundering penalties totaling nearly half a billion dollars from these entities, an amount that represents the sum of the funds they laundered.

DEA Administrator Michele M. Leonhart said: "DEA and its partners have exposed the Lebanese-Canadian Bank as a major money laundering source for Hezbollah. The connection between drug traffickers and terror networks is evident. By attacking the financial networks of those who wish to harm innocent Americans, DEA is strengthening national security and making our citizens safer."

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Drug Kingpin Charged with Laundering Hundreds of Millions for Cartels

On December 13 charges were announced against Ayman Joumaa aka "Junior," the alleged leader of an international drug trafficking and money laundering network. These charges include coordinating multi-ton shipments of cocaine from Colombia to the Los Zetas Mexican drug cartel—cocaine that was destined for the United States. In addition, Mr. Joumaa has been charged with laundering hundreds of millions of dollars in these drug proceeds and sending them back to Colombian cocaine suppliers.

"Ayman Joumaa is accused of facilitating the shipments of huge amounts of cocaine for the United States while laundering the proceeds all over the globe," said DEA Administrator Michele M. Leonhart. "According to information from sources, his alleged drug and money laundering activities facilitated numerous global drug trafficking organizations, including the criminal activities of the Los Zetas Mexican drug cartel. DEA and our partners will continue to expose and dismantle these worldwide networks."

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American Teens: Cigarette, Alcohol Use At Historic Lows, Marijuana Use Up

On December 14 the results of the annual Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey of eighth, 10th and 12th graders by the National Institutes of Health were released. The survey showed that cigarette and alcohol use by teens are at their lowest point since the MTF survey began in 1975. However, this positive news is tempered by a slowing rate of decline in teen smoking as well as continued high rates of abuse of other tobacco products (e.g., hookahs, small cigars, smokeless tobacco), marijuana, and prescription drugs, with more teens continuing to abuse marijuana than cigarettes, and alcohol remaining the drug of choice among all three age groups.

Despite some declines noted in the report, the use of marijuana has shown some increases in recent years and remains steady. Among 12th-graders, 38.4 percent reported past year use, and 6.6 percent reported daily use, up from 31.5 and 5 percent, respectively, five years ago. The upward trend in teens' abuse of marijuana corresponded to downward trends in their perception of risk. For example, only 22.7 percent of high school seniors saw great risk in smoking marijuana occasionally, compared to 25.9 percent five years ago.

In addition the rapid rise of synthetic marijuana (captured for the first time in this year's survey) was of great concern, with almost 1 in 9 (11.4 percent) of high school seniors reported using "Spice" in the past year—the second most abused illicit drug among seniors after marijuana.

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[Click Here To Read the MTF Report](#)

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DEA's Operation Family Reunion in LA Nets 14

On December 8, 14 defendants were arrested for being part of an alleged widespread drug trafficking organization based in Los Angeles, with five other defendants in the case already in custody. This indictment is the third in a series of investigations that began in 2006 and has focused on the Sendis Family drug trafficking organization and their Mexican suppliers.

Those arrested on December 8 are among 44 defendants named in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in November. Wiretapped communications outlined in the indictment involved discussions of shipments as large as 90 kilograms of cocaine and 30 pounds of methamphetamine. During the course of the investigation, authorities made seizures totaling approximately 75 pounds of methamphetamine, 100 kilograms of cocaine and \$1.1 million in cash.

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DID YOU KNOW?

DEA's primary mission is to enforce the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States, and that includes federal laws that prohibit the manufacture, distribution, and sale of marijuana. DEA's position on marijuana is based on science and is consistent with and a reflection of the policies promulgated by the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Department of Justice. To read more about DEA's Position on Marijuana and many of the reasons behind that position, click [here](#).

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